

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 NEA-07

CIAE-00 IO-03 /046 W

----- 003465

R 311138Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 875

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BERLIN 5773

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GE, US

SUBJECT: JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS: VISIT OF MR. FERENCZ

REF: (A) BERLIN 5744; (B) BERLIN 5731; (C) STATE 112202

SUMMARY

IN A CONVERSATION AT THE RESIDENCE ON MAY 26 WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS GRUNERT, I CLARIFIED FOR HIM MY UNDERSTANDING OF HONECKER'S COMMENTS TO ME ON THE SUBJECT OF JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS DURING MY MEETING WITH HONECKER IN LATE FEBRUARY, 1975. GRUNERT'S RECOLLECTION OF THIS COMMENT ACCORDS WITH MINE TO THE EFFECT THAT HONECKER MADE NO MENTION OF A PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN HIMSELF AND DR. GOLDMANN. GRUNERT THEN DESCRIBED THE GDR GOVERNMENT'S PROCEDURES AND VIEWPOINT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE PROPOSED NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE CONFERENCE OF JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS IN NEW YORK AND THE COMMITTEE OF ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN EAST BERLIN. ALTHOUGH THIS PRESENTATION WAS CONTRADICTORY IN SOME IMPORTANT RESPECTS, IT APPEARS THAT THE GDR GOVERNMENT HAS NOT REACHED A DECISION AGAINST A SETTLEMENT OF THESE CLAIMS. I REQUEST THAT THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS TELEGRAM, IF PASSED TO MR. FERENCZ, BE GIVEN TO HIM ON A VERY INFORMAL BASIS AND WITHOUT ATTRIBUTION TO ME. END SUMMARY

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1. I TOOK THE OCCASION ON MY TALK WITH GRUNERT, REPORTED

REF (A) TO RAISE WITH HIM THE RECENT CONVERSATION WHICH MR FERENCZ OF THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS HAD WITH HERR EINECKE OF THE COMMITTEE OF ANTI-FASCIST RESISTANCE FIGHTERS IN EAST BERLIN (REF (B)). I TOLD GRUNERT THAT ANY STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO ME TO THE EFFECT THAT HONECKER WOULD SEE DR NAHAM COLDMANN WAS INCORRECT. I THEN REPEATED MY VERSION OF THE COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT MADE BY HONECKER DURING OUR MEETING AT THE END OF FEBRUARY AT WHICH GRUNERT WAS PRESENT. WHILE GRUNERT SAID HE COULD NOT REMEMBER ALL THE DETAILS OF THAT CONVERSATION HIS RECOLLECTION ACCORDED WITH MINE. HE SAID IN THIS CONNECTION THAT HONECKER AND GDR OFFICIALS HAD NO QUESTION ABOUT THE CORRECTNESS OF MY REPORTS TO THE DEPARTMENT AND OF THE EMBASSY REPORTING.

2. GRUNERT THEN VOLUNTEERED WHAT HE SAID WERE THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GDR ON BOTH THE PROCEDURES AND SUBSTANCE OF CLAIMS BY THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS AGAINST THE GDR. HE PREFACED HIS COMMENTS BY SAYING THAT THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED WITHIN THE GDR GOVERNMENT DURING NEGOTIATIONS PRECEDING THE US-GDR AGREEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 4, 1974.

(A) AS TO PROCEDURE, HE SAID THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD PROCEED BETWEEN THESE TWO PRIVATE GROUPS AND WERE NOT TO BE OFFICIAL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. FOR THIS REASON, HE SAID, GDR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, ALTHOUGH IT WAS BEING "PRESSURED" BY THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS, WOULD NOT RECEIVE GOLDMANN OR OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS CONFERENCE. FURTHER, THEY WOULD NOT BE RECEIVED BY HONECKER OR OTHER OFFICIALS OF THE GDR; THE ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE WAS READY TO RECEIVE THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONFERENCE SHOULD APPLY TO MEET WITH THE COMMITTEE AT ONCE TO PRESENT ITS CLAIMS.

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LIMDIS

GRUNERT SAID THAT THE STATUS AND AUTHORITY OF THE CONFERENCE WERE UNCLEAR BUT THAT THEY APPEARED TO WANT TO REPRESENT THE CLAIMS OF CITIZENS OF SEVERAL COUNTRIES. THE GDR, WOULD NOT DISCUSS CLAIMS OTHER THAN THOSE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS. HE STATED FURTHER THAT GOLDMANN'S CITIZENSHIP WAS UNCLEAR AND THAT A JEWISH CITIZEN OF THE FRG (POSSIBLY A FRANKFURT LAWYER WHOSE NAME GRUNERT COULD NOT RECALL) WAS ATTEMPTING TO INTERVENE IN THE MATTER ALTHOUGH GRUNERT DID NOT KNOW FOR WHAT PURPOSE.

(B) ON SUBSTANCE, GRUNERT SAID THAT THE GDR GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT IT HAD NO LEGAL OR MORAL OBLIGATION TO PAY SUCH CLAIMS; THAT ON THE LEGAL ISSUE, THE FRG HAD REPORTEDLY UNDERTAKEN TO REPRESENT JEWISH CLAIMS FOR BOTH THE FRG AND GDR. GRUNERT THEN MADE A VAGUE REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT THE GDR HAD PAID REPARATIONS. ON THE MORAL ISSUE, GRUNERT SAID THAT OFFICIALS OF THE GDR WERE "ANTI-FASCIST" BEFORE AND DURING THE HITLER REGIME AND THAT THEY HAD SINCE WORKED SUCCESSFULLY TO "EDUCATE" THE PEOPLE OF THE GDR AGAINST FASCISM.

3. I NOTED TO GRUNERT THAT WHILE THE AGREEMENT LAST SEPTEMBER APPEARED TO BE FOR PRIVATE AND UNOFFICIAL NEGOTIATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS PEOPLE WERE SYMPATHETIC TO AND SUPPORTED A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF THE CLAIMS OF THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS WITH THE GDR.

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4. COMMENT. I DID NOT POINT OUT THE BLATANT CONTRADICTION IN GRUNERT'S STATEMENT; THAT WHILE THIS SUBJECT WAS ALLEGEDLY FOR PRIVATE NEGOTIATION ONLY, HE WAS MAKING MANY REFERENCES TO GDR DETERMINATIONS ON PROCEDURES AND SUBSTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, I DOUBT THAT GRUNERT HAS THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE A JUDGMENT ON THE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS. I SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT INFORM THE CONFERENCE ON JEWISH MATERIAL CLAIMS THAT I HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT IT SHOULD APPLY FOR A MEETING WITH THE GDR'S ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE IF GOLDMANN DESIRES TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO SEE HONECKER, THAT SHOULD BE THE AFFAIR OF THE CONFERENCE. I AGAIN SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT ADVISE

FERENCZ THAT I HAVE INFORMED THE DEPARTMENT THAT HIS STATEMENT TO EINECKE ABOUT HONECKER'S WILLINGNESS TO SEE GOLDMANN WAS INCORRECT.

5. DURING RECENT CALLS BY THE AMBASSADORS OF SYRIA AND LEBANON, I WAS QUESTIONED CLOSELY ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPOSED NEGOTIATIONS, PARTICULARLY WHETHER THE PROCEEDS OF ANY SETTLEMENT WERE TO BE GIVEN TO ISRAEL. SUCH A SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON ARAB COUNTRIES. MY ANSWER WAS THAT I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PROCEEDS OF ANY SETTLEMENT WERE TO BE PAID TO THE PRIVATE COMMITTEE IN THE US FOR DISTRIBUTION TO INDIVIDUALS. THESE INQUIRIES MAY INDICATE THAT ARAB COUNTRIES ARE TALKING TO GDR OFFICIALS ABOUT THIS SUBJECT.

6. I REQUEST THAT THE FOREGOING INFORMATION BE USED WITH CIRCUMSPECTION BY THE DEPARTMENT AND THAT IT BE PROVIDED ONLY IN SUBSTANCE, AND WITH APPROPRIATE CAVEATS, TO MR FERENCZ. I SUSPECT THAT MRGSTPNJQZ MAY HAVE AT LEAST AN ZWDDTINTEJDR ATTITUDES NOTED ABOVE AND THAT THIS INFORMATION MAY NOT COME AS A SUPRISE TO HIM AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE. SINCE MY CONVERSATION WAS INFORMAL AND TOOK PLACE IN A SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE, AND BECAUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDELINES ON HANDLING THIS SUBJECT (REF C), I BELIEVE ANY MENTION OF IT TO MR FERENCZ SHOULD BE ON A VERY IFFORMAL BASIS AND WITHOUT SPECIAL ATTRIBUTION TO ME.COOPER
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